

19 before releasing them. Let that sink in.

The Department charged with protecting the homeland lacks an executable strategy to ensure that all illegal immigrants are properly screened and tested before they are released into the interior.

In order to right this wrong and stand up for the safety of all Americans, I will be introducing the COVID-19 Border Protection Act, a bill that repurposes COVID relief funds, funds from Democrats' nearly \$2 trillion package slated to be sent overseas, to test immigrants who are encountered by Federal officials at the border and quarantine those who test positive. I took an oath to protect all Americans, and this bill does just that.

The crisis at the border is unacceptable and it exemplifies the threat posed by the rollback of Trump-era policies that were tough on illegal immigration.

□ 2115

Illegal immigrants should not be allowed to enter our country to begin with, and a wall would help do just that. But they should certainly not be allowed to enter and spread the COVID-19 virus. All Americans should be appalled with the crisis at the border.

I call on my colleagues to join me in rejecting the administration's America second policies and get tough on illegal immigration.

Mr. CLOUD. Mr. Speaker, we are indeed a compassionate Nation, we recognize that everyone on this planet are people created in the image of God. We understand that people are hurting all over the world.

The solution for that, however, is for us to be that shining city on the hill, for us to be an example to the world. For them to know that if you live by the same principles that have made this Nation into one of the brightest beacons of freedom through all of human history that you can achieve the same results.

We want people to prosper everywhere. We want every nation to prosper, and that is why we are so intent on stopping this terrible scourge that is at our southern border. These cartels are wreaking havoc in the lives of these people, and we have to put an end to this.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD an article titled "Color-Coded Passage: Why Smugglers are Tagging U.S.-Bound Migrants with Wristbands."

It has recently come to light that a number of the migrants are coming over with wristbands. The question was asked, Why?

[From Reuters, Mar. 9, 2021]

COLOR-CODED PASSAGE: WHY SMUGGLERS ARE TAGGING U.S.-BOUND MIGRANTS WITH WRISTBANDS

(By Adrees Latif, Laura Gottesdiener, Mica Rosenberg)

PENITAS, TX.—Along the banks of the Rio Grande in the scrubby grassland near

Penitas, Texas, hundreds of colored plastic wristbands ripped off by migrants litter the ground, signs of what U.S. border officials say is a growing trend among powerful drug cartels and smugglers to track people paying to cross illegally into the United States.

The plastic bands—red, blue, green, white—some labeled arrivals or entries in Spanish, are discarded after migrants cross the river on makeshift rafts, according to a Reuters witness. Their use has not been widely reported before.

Some migrants are trying to evade border agents, others are mostly Central American families or young children traveling without parents who turn themselves into officials, often to seek asylum.

Border Patrol agents in the Rio Grande Valley sector, which spans more than 34,000 square miles (88,000 square kilometers) along the border in southeast Texas, have recently encountered immigrants wearing the bracelets during several apprehensions, said Matthew Dyman a spokesman for U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The "information on the bracelets represents a multitude of data that is used by smuggling organizations, such as payment status or affiliation with smuggling groups," Dyman told Reuters.

The differing smuggling techniques come as Democratic President Joe Biden's administration has sought to reverse restrictive immigration policies set up by his predecessor, former President Donald Trump. But a recent jump in border crossings has Republicans warning the easing of hardline policies will lead to an immigration crisis.

U.S. border agents carried out nearly 100,000 apprehensions or rapid expulsions of migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border in February, according to two people familiar with preliminary figures, the highest monthly total since mid-2019.

#### PURPLE BRACELET

"They run it like a business," said Cardinal Brown, which means "finding more patrons and looking for efficiencies." Migrants can pay thousands of dollars for the journey to the United States and human smugglers have to pay off drug cartels to move people through parts of Mexico.

"This is a money-making operation and they have to pay close attention to who has paid," she said. "This may be a new way to keep track."

Criminal groups operating in northern Mexico, however, have long used systems to log which migrants have already paid for the right to be in gang-controlled territory, as well as for the right to cross the border into the United States, migration experts said.

A migrant in Reynosa—one of the most dangerous cities in Mexico across the border from McAllen, Texas—who declined to give his name for fear of retaliation, showed Reuters a picture of a purple wristband he was wearing.

He said he paid \$500 to one of the criminal groups in the city after he arrived a few months ago from Honduras to secure the purple bracelet to protect against kidnapping or extortion. He said once migrants or their smugglers have paid for the right to cross the river, which is also controlled by criminal groups, they receive another bracelet.

"This way we're not in danger, neither us nor the 'coyote,'" he said, using the Spanish word for smuggler.

One human smuggler who spoke on conditions of anonymity, confirmed the bracelets were a system to designate who has paid for the right to transit through cartel territory.

"They are putting these (bracelets) on so there aren't killings by mistake," he said.

Migrants and smugglers say the use of bracelets to designate who has paid for the

right to cross the river is a system required by the cartels that control waterfront territory in the conflict-ridden state of Tamaulipas.

In January, a group of migrants were massacred in Tamaulipas state just 40 miles (70 km) west of Reynosa. Twelve local Mexican police have been arrested in connection with the massacre.

Mr. CLOUD. Mr. Speaker, a migrant in Reynosa said this: "He paid one of the criminal groups in the city after he arrived a few months ago from Honduras to secure the purple bracelet to protect against kidnapping and extortion."

"He said once migrants or their smugglers have paid for the right to cross the river, which is also controlled by criminal groups, they receive another bracelet."

So basically, cartels are going throughout, they are recruiting people to come, charging them thousands of dollars. At each step along the way they have to pay another fee to get across the territory that is controlled by cartels.

One human smuggler who spoke up, of course, on the condition of anonymity, confirmed that the bracelets were a system to designate who was paid for the right to transit through cartel territory. And this is what he said: "They are putting these bracelets on so there aren't killings by mistake."

This is what we are allowing, and it is tragic. We can do better than this.

We can mitigate the influence that the cartels are having at our border, and communities throughout my State, in particular, in Texas, and throughout our Nation. We can mitigate this humanitarian and this national security crisis, and I encourage the White House to do so, and for this House to take up legislation to secure our border as well.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

#### ADJOURNMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to section 11(b) of House Resolution 188, the House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon (at 9 o'clock and 20 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Friday, March 19, 2021, at 9 a.m.

#### EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 2 of rule XIV, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

EC-629. A letter from the Congressional Assistant II, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, transmitting the Board's interim final rule — Loans to Executive Officers, Directors, and Principal Shareholders of Member Banks [Regulation O; Docket No.: R-1740] (RIN: 7100-AG10) received March 18, 2021, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); Public Law 104-121, Sec. 251; (110 Stat. 868); to the Committee on Financial Services.